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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

76-3209

National Intelligence Officers

SP - 136/76  
12 August 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

FROM: National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs

SUBJECT: DoD Request for Backfire Briefing

1. Yesterday morning Dr. Jim Wade called me on behalf of Secretary Rumsfeld to request that on 19 August CIA provide a DoD review panel with a briefing on its new methodology and findings about Backfire performance. Wade is assistant to the SecDef for SALT. He said the purpose of the review was to enable him and the Secretary to decide what position they should take about Backfire as a SALT issue. The timing was to enable them to reach this decision as soon as possible. The review panel would consist of qualified engineers and aerodynamicists from outside of government, and it would review both the CIA and FTD analyses. Dr. Wade said he called me because Andy Marshall, who was arranging the review, had been unable to get CIA to accede to the proposed date.

2. Shortly after noon yesterday, I consulted with Zeke Zellmer, who had been in contact with Marshall, and together we put the problem to Mr. Bush. On his instruction, this morning I informed Wade that Mr. Bush would be happy to provide the DoD panel with a CIA technical briefing approximately one week later than Wade and Marshall had requested, i.e., on 26 or 27 August. I explained that Mr. Bush had directed CIA analysts to put top priority on completing their studies of the sensitivity of their findings to uncertainties in the data, and on preparing themselves for their own technical review with outside consultants. That review had already been scheduled for 24-25 August. I said we were finding that we were being time-pressured and interrupted by consumers and critics, and that this was slowing down CIA's evaluation of its own preliminary findings. Mr. Bush had committed himself to the President to do a thorough job and to advise the President, in early September if possible but not against a fixed deadline. I said Mr. Bush wanted Mr. Rumsfeld to be assured that Rumsfeld would have ample time to review the CIA findings before Bush reported to the President, and that he would welcome any feedback from the DoD review.

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3. Wade initially said my comments meant that what had been presented to the Verification Panel last month had been premature and based on "shoddy" work. I pointed out that it had been a non-technical preliminary report designed to prevent the policymakers from being caught by surprise, and said I assumed that the DoD review would require detailed technical presentations by the analysts who were assigned to complete the study. Wade established by questions that Mr. Bush was planning to report to the President as DCI, rather than as representative of a single agency, said he would be glad to provide feedback from the DoD review, and accepted the 26-27 August schedule I had proposed. We agreed that he would get Andy Marshall to work out the details with Zeke Zellmer. (Wade talked as if they would try for the morning of the 26th.)

4. In the course of our conversations, Wade referred several times to the Secretary's desire to look at the Backfire question afresh, regardless of what the previous DoD position had been. He said several times that the longer the interval between the VP meeting at which CIA's preliminary findings were reported and the time when the US was in a position to decide on Backfire's implications for SALT, the more difficult and "embarrassing" it would be to explain to Congress. Finally, he said twice that he and the Secretary were "damn mad" about the recent leak to Evans and Novak, to which I replied that Mr. Bush was incensed about it.



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